



Demand for Good Local Governance

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Questions

Does the provision of good local governance where it did not previously exist promote community demand for good local governance?

Are there documented examples where bottom-up demand for good local governance has influenced an improvement in governance provision, particularly in an authoritarian and/ or post-conflict setting? And any assessments as to why the governing power would make these changes?

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1. Overview

This rapid review synthesises literature from academic, policy and NGO sources on the demand for local governance. The main objective is to understand whether the implementation of good local governance¹ leads to a local demand for good governance with a focus on fragile and conflict affected states. There is a significant lack of literature on the topic with no single article focusing on the provision demand nexus of local governance. However some articles do focus on the relationship between accountability and governance and briefly touch on demands.

Key findings are as follows:

- If the local governance provided is based on citizen participation, the population is more likely to demand good governance. Mechanisms for local accountability also increase the demand for good governance.
- Demand also depends on expectations of what the government can deliver and if the government is deemed to be trying it enhances its legitimacy.
- The equal distribution of resources across the country is important in the government's legitimacy and the population's demand for good local governance.
- If the population has a low opinion of the state and does not expect them to deliver, they are less likely to demand good local governance.
- Post-conflict and fragile states are characterised by weak states and weak civil society, making both the demand and supply of good governance difficult.
- Participation and a strong civil society may lead to demands for good governance, but changes will not occur unless the government itself is responsive.
- State responsiveness is dependent on the level of democracy (giving the citizens the freedom to make demands), political will (systematic commitment to accountability in order to deliver on demands), a legal framework (that does not put structural constraints on change).
- The population may be aware of the need for good governance, but due to an oppressive state may not demand it for fear of the repercussions.
- Citizen capabilities impact on their ability to make demands and they need to know what to demand and how to demand it, collective action is key in successful demands.
- Citizen demands are strengthened through the presence of an active media, the level of social mobilisation, the existence of coalitions that can mobilise evidence effectively, and the existence of intermediaries who can transfer and communicate information to officials.
- If civilians are involved in the formulation of the local governance system they are more likely to engage in trying to maintain it, or make demands to improve it.
- International support of local governance in Afghanistan was largely viewed as a temporary way of gaining funds and the local community was also weary of the system, as they feared coming under the control of military leaders or criminal networks.

¹ Good local governance refers to any form of local governance that produce results that meet the needs of society while making the best use of resources at their disposal.

- During the civil war in Nepal parallel local government structures were created which improved people's access to services, however, following the end of the conflict expectations with regards to local governance were not met.
- In Somaliland local governance developed organically following the collapse of the Somali state. There is a pride in the international attention Somaliland's local governance system receives, and as such expectations have increased, but have not yet been met.

2. Demand for Good Governance

Good governance is defined by processes and institutions produce results that meet the needs of society while making the best use of resources at their disposal. According to the UN it has eight major characteristics: it is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law.² Local governance refers to any form of governance that is decentralised from the state and done at the local level.

Good governance is not confined to one type and the type of governance offered does impact on how the community engages with it. Governance with the principles of participation and accountability at the core brings the local citizens into the political arena and thus is more likely to lead to them demanding good governance and to citizens holding the government to account. Through making citizens part of the decision-making process, expectations on delivery are increased. Additionally, if mechanisms of local accountability are in place – such as public meetings, opinion surveys, or a strong civil society – the demand for good governance is increased (Blair, 2000).

Meeting the needs of the population is an important part of good governance and thus service delivery is central. As Mcloughlin (2015) highlights the provision of services gives legitimacy to the provider and this legitimacy is based on performance and not on charisma or tradition and is thus directly connected to functioning institutions. However, citizens' expectations impacts legitimacy, thus how much the government is trying is important and an improvement in service provision would enhance legitimacy. Therefore, rapid improvements (or degradation) have more of an impact on state legitimacy. However, as some cases have proved, a basic level of service provision is necessary in order for the citizens to appreciate improvements. Therefore, the provision of services at a local level creates a form of legitimacy and failure to continue would thus cause delegitimisation. In a conflict setting the provision of services in the case of re-emergence of state control of an area is important in the (re)legitimisation of the state. However, in this case the provision of services across the country needs to be deemed fair, as any inequalities perceived would lead to the delegitimisation of the state. It is also possible for the population to attribute the service provision to other actors if they previously provided the services or are visibly present (in the case of INGOs) (Mcloughlin, 2015).

The society's concept of the state and their expectations also impact on the demand for good governance. If the population does not expect the state to deliver, they are less likely to make demands. If the citizens have formulated their own methods, or have relied on other non-

² <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/good-governance.pdf>

governmental actors during the conflict and the government lacks legitimacy, they are less likely to demand formal local governance and are more likely to continue with their already established mechanisms of service delivery. The fairness of distribution of resources across the country is an important factor in government legitimacy and thus demands (Batley et al., 2012).

During a conflict a wartime order is formed, which can involve rebel governance. If this rebel governance is seen as delivering on the population's needs, it gains legitimacy. However, following the conflict the state will attempt to take control in order to gain legitimacy. This can be through co-opting the rebel governance network, taking complete control, or trying to reform it with its own supporters. This usually leads to local governance suffering, however cases where there is a competition between the state and the local actors over governance can also lead to a re-emergence of conflict (Podder, 2014).

An issue with the demand for good governance in a post-conflict or fragile state is that they are usually characterised by a weak state and a weak civil society and thus there needs to be support for the reconstruction of both local state and civil society structures and the encouragement for them to work together. Nonetheless, the post conflict period is a window of opportunity for local, demand-driven governance structures, particularly if they involve reconstruction and development (Jordhus-Lier et al., 2009).

State Responsiveness

Gaventa (2004) argues that although participation and a strong civil society may lead to the expression of the demands of the citizens, if this is not paired with a responsive government this will not lead to changes in governance. Therefore, Gaventa highlights the importance of a dual approach in interventions, focusing on supporting citizen demand, but also a responsive and effective state. Importantly, Gaventa also highlights that participation and the right to demand rights is not always possible in all contexts and under oppressive regimes, although the citizens may be aware that good governance is no longer being delivered they may not have the freedom to demand it. Thus, he argues that international actors should work on strengthening local voices as well as strengthening the receptivity to these voices by international institutions (Gaventa, 2004). Similarly, Mansuri and Rao (2012: 88) argue that:

empowered participation requires a strong, functioning state that has not only internalized the broad objective of deepening democracy and developed a much more astute view of citizens' role in shaping policy but has also actively promoted and supervised the process by which this process happens.

It is argued that social accountability initiatives can lead to empowerment, as by providing information on rights and entitlements, the population is given a voice to demand good governance. However, donor expectations on what citizen voice and accountability can achieve in terms of development and good governance is often too high. The impact of civilian-led demands for good governance are dependent on the state's responsiveness, which in turn is dependent on a number of factors:

- Firstly, the level of democratisation has significant influence; if there are not freedoms of association, media, etc. then it is difficult for civilian-led initiatives to have much impact. McGee and Gaventa (2010) argue that there is little evidence of the impact of civilian initiatives in non-democratic settings.

- Secondly, political will is important in creating an atmosphere of supply when there is a demand. There needs to be a systematic commitment to accountability and an institutionalisation of the process, otherwise individuals with a commitment will be unable to implement processes to answer civilians' demands.
- Finally, legal frameworks also impact the process, as structural constraints can limit the possibility for change (McGee and Gaventa, 2010).

Citizen Capabilities

McGee and Gaventa (2010) also argue that a number of factors need to be present on the citizens' side in order to facilitate the demand for good governance. The citizens need to have the capabilities to effectively demand better governance and thus facilities need to be in place to enable them to understand what to demand and how to demand it. This is strengthened through factors such as an active media, the level of social mobilisation, the existence of coalitions that can mobilise evidence effectively, and the existence of intermediaries who can transfer and communicate information to officials. The way in which demands are enacted also impact on the success, for instance when demands are linked to other mobilisation strategies such as advocacy, litigation, electoral pressure, or protest movements they are often more likely to have an impact. Moreover a combination of these approaches contributes to greater effectiveness, with collective action being a key principle. Additionally, it has been found that when civilians are involved in the formulation of the system they are more likely to engage in trying to maintain it (McGee and Gaventa, 2010).

It is important to note that state-society factors do not exist in isolation from one another, and are rather interdependent and mutually constructive and thus multiple actors can be involved in leading to change (McGee and Gaventa, 2010).

3. Case Studies

Afghanistan

In Afghanistan the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) was established in 2003 under the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) with a budget of USD 929 million from 2003 to 2010. The NSP had involved facilitating the establishment of 18,491 Community Development Councils (CDCs), leading to the drafting of 18,234 Community Development Plans (CDPs). The NSP promotes good local governance and aims to empower rural communities to make their own decisions. Another initiative, the National Area-Based Development Programme (NABDP), has established District Development Assemblies (DDAs) in 306 districts in all 34 provinces in order to further empower local communities in the creation of district development plans. Although these programmes have witnessed some success, many in the central government view them purely as temporary solution that enables them to gain international funds and these institutions are heavily dependent on international funds. Moreover, the local community (and Afghan politicians) is weary of too much decentralisation, as they fear coming under the command of military leaders or criminal networks (Jordhus-Lier et al., 2009).

Nepal

In Nepal there was a civil war between the Maoists and the government between 1996 and 2006. As a result of the lack of state capacity, parallel structures opened up for resource allocation and political decision-making. The Maoists set up a parallel administration in areas under their control and created 'People's Committees' in villages. They also welcomed local level programmes and projects supported by the donor agencies without government involvement. As a result people's access to services such as health, education, and rural infrastructure actually improved during the conflict. Following the end of the conflict and with the formation of a new government the demand and expectations were high, and despite the Maoists dominating the government, expectations were not met and links to local government were weak. Moreover, accountability of service providers moved upwards towards the state, rather than with the local governance structures (Jordhus-Lier et al., 2009). In Nepal political will for decentralisation and more autonomy for local governance is weak. More importantly, there has not been a strong local demand from civil society, as it lacks cohesiveness and consensus. As a result, the wartime practice of local governance and the population's desire for stronger local governance has not been implemented since the end of the conflict (Rai & Paudel, 2011).

Somaliland

Following the collapse of the Somali state in 1991 Somaliland declared independence (which is not internationally recognised). A 'thin' form of government with minimum authority and functions was pursued in Somaliland with local customary authorities at the core. Thus Somaliland transformed from the military rule of an authoritarian ruler under the previous regime, to one with local governance and participation as central practices. Moe (2013: 157) argues that 'the gradual legitimisation of the new political order was enabled exactly because the process was not 'planned', managed and sequenced by external actors or by a central state'. Although the customary authorities remain extremely important and still are key actors in conflict resolution and security, as Somaliland has developed so have the population's expectations from the state and discourses on individual human rights and gender equality have grown. In Somaliland the people are proud of their hybrid governance system and the attention it gains from international actors and it therefore has much support and demands on its improvement. However, local authorities still need support in developing and ensuring that they deliver on local needs, particularly in the context of an unrecognised state (Moe, 2013).

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Expert Comments

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